

Brown Introduces Similar Legislation in the Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Rep. Charlie Wilson (D-OH) of Ohio's Sixth Congressional District introduced legislation that would expand access to services and benefits for veterans living in Appalachia. The Appalachian Veterans Outreach Improvement Act would authorize a cooperative agreement between the Secretary of VA and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). Earlier today, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) introduced similar legislation in the Senate.

"This legislation is about connecting the dots for our veterans," Wilson said. "Our veterans not only deserve quality care, but they have earned it. Too often, our rural veterans lack the resources necessary to access their Federal benefits and services. That's just not fair and we need to fix it," Wilson said. "I'm grateful that Senator Brown spearheaded this important effort in the Senate, and I'm proud to have introduced companion legislation in the House."

On a press conference call earlier today, Sen. Brown and Rep. Wilson explained that the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government. Brown and Wilson believe that linking the VA with ARC would help the VA adapt its outreach efforts to consider the unique challenges of the region.

Brown's legislation in the Senate and Wilson's legislation in the House would provide outreach and other technical assistance to Veterans in Appalachia. This joint effort would ensure that veterans are aware of all the VA benefits for which they are eligible, along with other services and credits, from the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), to Small Business Association (SBA) loans, to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

There are more than 75,000 veterans in the 12 counties that make up Ohio's Sixth Congressional district. Collectively those veterans received more than \$125 million in VA Benefits in 2009.

"I know the ARC can help them receive more," Wilson said. "The VA knows veterans, but ARC knows Appalachia. Establishing this relationship just makes good common sense."

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